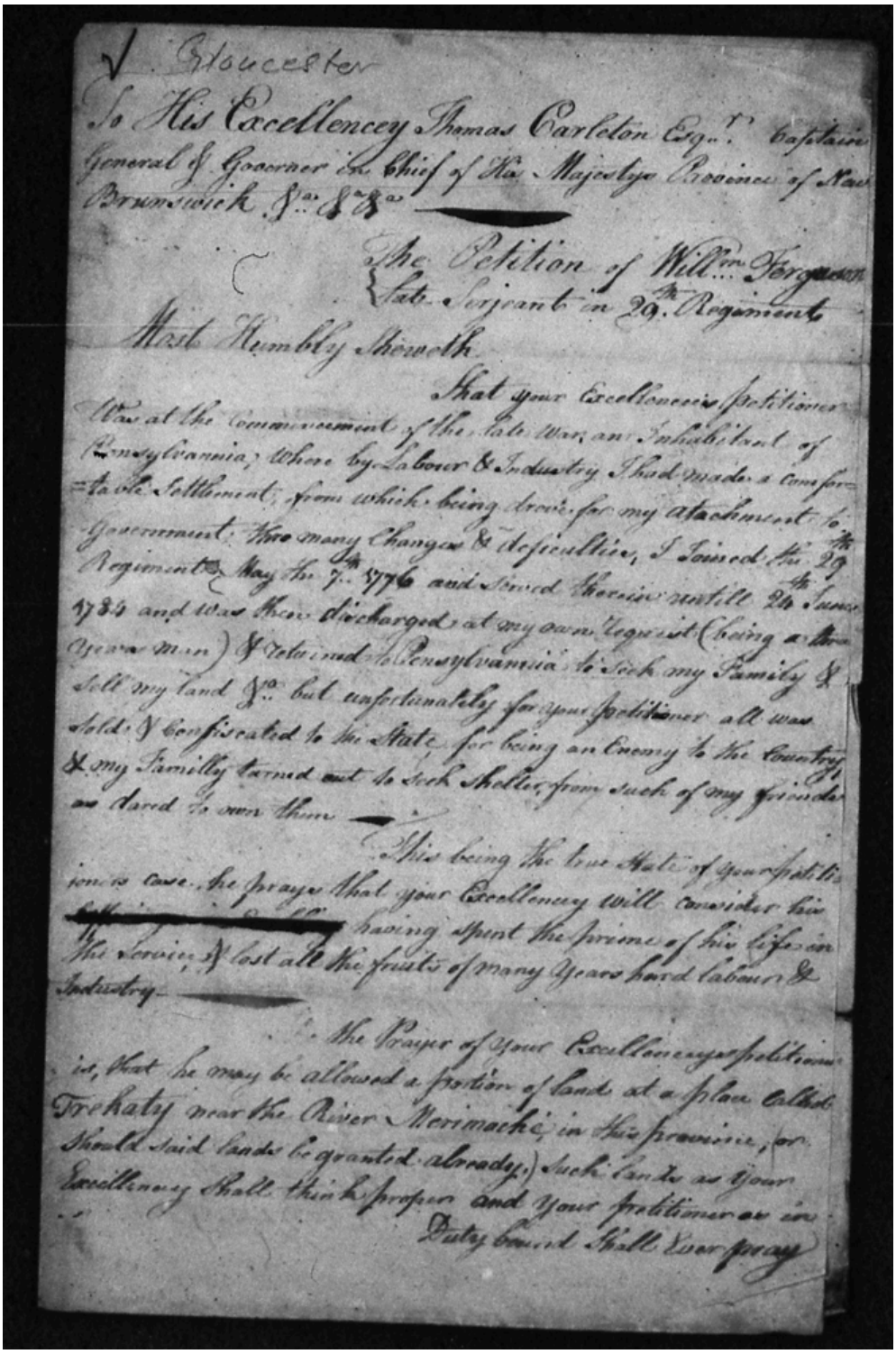


√ Gloucester

To His Excellencey Thomas Carleton Esq.r Captain General & Governor in Chief of His Majestys Province of New Brunswick &c. &c. &c.

The Petition of Will.m Ferguson late Serjeant in 29th Regiment

Most Humbly Sheweth

That your Excellencies petitioner Was at the Commencement of the late War, an Inhabitant of Pensylvannia, Where by Labour & Industry I had made a comfortable Settlement, from which being drove for my atachment to Government thro many Changes & deficulties, I Joined the 29th Regiment May the 7th 1776 and Served therein untill 24th June 1784 and was then discharged at my own request (being a three years man) & returned to Pensylvannia to seek my Family & sell my land &c. but unfortunately for your petitioner all was sold & confiscated to the State for being an Enemy to the Country & my Familly turned out to seek Shelter from such of my friends as dared to own them

This being the true State of your petitioners case, he prays that your Excellency will consider his [redacted] having spent the prime of his life in the Service & lost all the fruits of many Years hard labour & Industry

The Prayer of your Excellencey's petitioner is, that he may be allowed a portion of land at a place called Trekaty near the River Merimache, in this province, (or should said lands be granted already,) such lands as your Excellency shall think proper and your petitioner as in Duty bound shall Ever pray

The Ferguson Lineage: From Scotland to Ireland to America 1605-1830

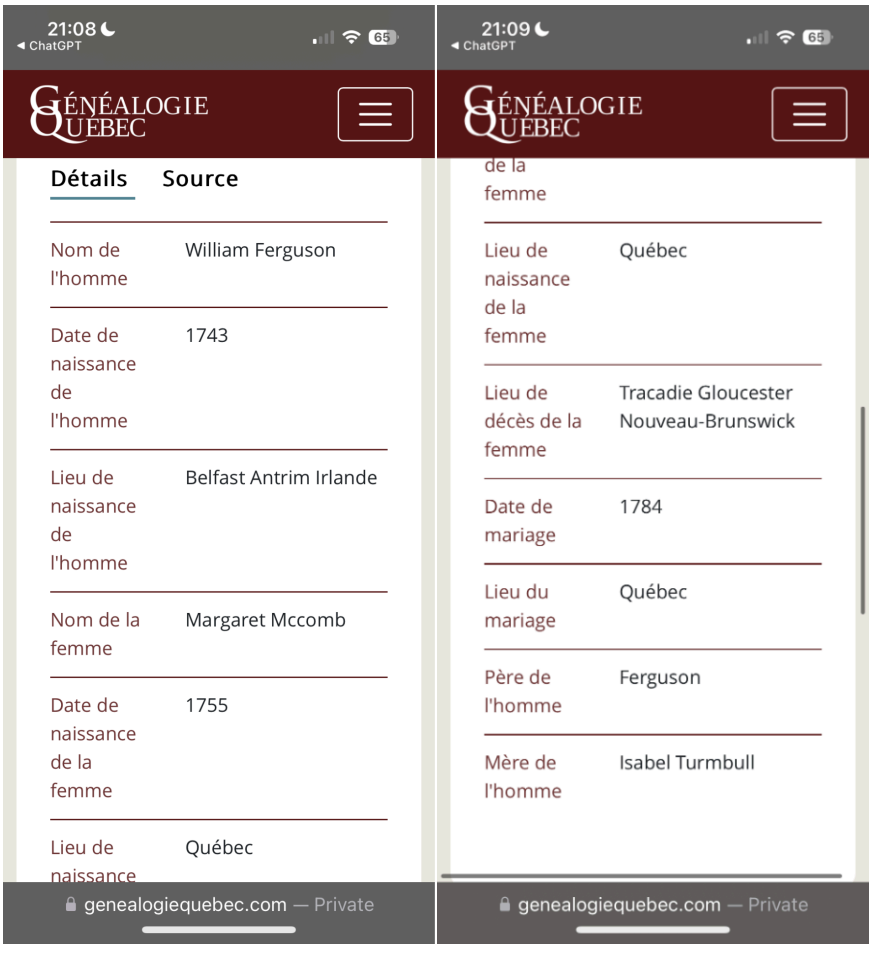
This report follows the order in which the evidence was uncovered, beginning not in Scotland or Ireland, but in post-Revolutionary Pennsylvania. From there, it traces the Ferguson family and their allied cluster into New Brunswick, where their Loyalist petitions and community ties provide crucial clues. Only after establishing this North American foundation does the investigation turn back across the Atlantic—to Cumberland County's deeper roots in Ireland, and ultimately to their origins in Scotland.

On the left side of this page is one of the most crucial documents related to William Ferguson: his 1786 petition to the British Crown for land, following his service as a sergeant in the 29th Regiment of Foot. In it, he recounts the losses he and his family suffered in Pennsylvania due to his loyalty to the Crown, in his own words:

> ***"Was an inhabitant of Pennsylvania whereby labour and industry I had made a comfortable settlement from which being drove for my attachment to government thru many changes and difficulties I joined the 29th Regiment May 7, 1776, and served therein until 24 June 1784 and was then discharged at my own request being a three-year man and return to Pennsylvania to seek my family and sell my land, but unfortunately for your petitioner all was sold and confiscated to the state for being an enemy to the country, and my family turned out to seek shelter from such of my friends who dared to own them."***

The largest breakthrough came while reviewing Loyalist petitions in New Brunswick, where I identified a set of interconnected families who consistently appeared as adjacent households, military comrades, and legal witnesses. These families—Ferguson, Trimble, Clark, Moore, Campbell, Gibson, Hamilton, Paterson, Brown, Hunter, Stewart, Forsyth, Black, Hay, Fleming and others—shared not only surnames, but a distinct socio-economic profile: literate, Presbyterian, often military, and often in debt (after the Revolutionary War).

That debt was critical. In Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, I found land petitions, probate documents, and tax rolls that revealed a Ferguson family in decline. They had arrived as landholders in the 1750s, owning multiple lands with hundreds of acres, and packed houses. But, by the 1770s, they had lost property, were living with friends, and the ones who remained petitioned after the war to reclaim their lost land. The family split—some stayed, some went west or south, and some, like William Ferguson and many others from his cluster, fled north to Canada as Loyalists.



Another major breakthrough was a marriage certificate from Quebec dated 1784. It listed William's birthplace as Belfast, County Antrim, and named William's parents as Ferguson and Isabel Turmbull. While no first name was given for the father, land leases from Antrim County and Pennsylvania provide a strong argument that William's father was also named William Ferguson. His grandfather, also named William Ferguson, was a schoolmaster and leaseholder in Carrickfergus—appearing in deeds from 1709 to 1753 and

frequently acting as witness in Trimble land transactions.

The name “Isabel Turmbull” proved to be the key. In the Registry of Deeds for Ireland, I identified a Trimble family whose surname is rendered with striking inconsistency—appearing as Crymble, Crumble, Crymbl, Trumble, Trumbull, Tremble, and ultimately Trimble, often within the same document. This is not conjecture, but a direct consequence of 18th-century handwriting, where capital C and T are sometimes indistinguishable. When considered alongside the family’s location and Presbyterian background, the identification of “Isabel Turmbull” as Elizabeth Trimble is not merely plausible—it is strongly corroborated by historical context. This matters because Elizabeth Trimble, born in 1719 near Belfast, belonged to a family closely and consistently connected to the Fergusons. And notably, the wife of William Ferguson Sr was named Elizabeth.

This report presents the full body of evidence—leases, tax records, petitions, and interlinked family clusters—beginning with the Fergusons in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania by 1753. From there, it follows their Loyalist trajectory into New Brunswick by 1786, then works backward across the Atlantic to their roots in Carrickfergus in the early 1700s, and ultimately to Dumfriesshire, Scotland in 1605. Each section builds on documented links, revealing not only where they were—but who they were.

In the course of this work, I relied on a range of techniques to identify and confirm members of the Ferguson family. I began by isolating their migration cluster—families that consistently appeared together in land records, tax rolls, and military petitions across generations and regions. I built a searchable database to track these surnames and cross-reference locations, dates, and relationships. I compared original signatures across documents to distinguish individuals with common names, and used handwriting recognition to catch transcription errors and surname variants. I frequently used a free-text search option on the FamilySearch website, which allows unlimited flexibility in querying names, places, and timeframes. When I entered our core cluster surnames without specifying a location, the search results consistently aligned with the exact migration pattern outlined in this report—tracing our families from Ayr to Antrim, through Pennsylvania, and into New Brunswick. These approaches allowed me to detect recurring patterns in naming, landholding, and witness behavior—patterns that would be invisible when viewing each record in isolation.

What follows is the reconstruction of a family’s migration over two centuries, drawn from original records and built on a foundation laid by earlier researchers, including Paul Thériault. I hope this contribution offers something new—and something useful—for the continuing story of William Ferguson.

William Ferguson’s Parents and the Crymble–Trimble-Trumbull Connection

The 1784 marriage record of William Ferguson and Margaret McComb, recorded in Quebec City, contains a valuable genealogical clue: it names William’s birthplace as Belfast, County Antrim, and identifies his mother as “Isabel Turmbull.” While the name may appear unfamiliar at

first glance, further analysis confirms that this is a phonetic rendering of Elizabeth Trimble, wife of William Ferguson Sr.

What makes this identification credible is not only the consistency of the Trimble name in Ferguson family records across Antrim, Pennsylvania, and New Brunswick, but also the way the surname appears within primary documents under multiple variants—even within a single entry. For example, in the 1729 memorial concerning a land transaction in Ballygallagh, the same individual is listed in different places as: Charles Crymble, Charles Crumble, Charles Crymbl, Charles Trimble. This inconsistency isn't clerical error—it reflects the reality of 18th-century handwriting, accent, and transcription practices. A scribe unfamiliar with the family may easily hear "Trimble" and write "Crymble," or see a "C" and assume it's a "T." This is especially likely in official land deeds and registry memorials, where names were often relayed orally or hastily copied.

This interpretation is further strengthened by the presence of Trimbles across all four migration regions central to this family's story: Ayrshire Scotland, Ulster Ireland, Cumberland Pennsylvania, and New Brunckwick Canada.

In each of these regions, the Trimble and Ferguson families appear in proximity—often as witnesses, adjacent households, or land partners. These patterns are not coincidental. They reveal a consistent, intermarried cluster that moved together across generations and continents.

Ruling Out the Others — A Forensic Review of Every William Ferguson (Antrim, Pennsylvania, and British Military Records)

To confirm the identity of William Ferguson, Loyalist of Tracadie, I conducted a methodical review of every William Ferguson who appeared in three key contexts: County Antrim (Ireland), colonial and post-colonial Pennsylvania (from 1700 onward), and British/Loyalist military service (1775–1784). This work involved thousands of document cross-references and dozens of individual case profiles—some of which I followed well into the 1800s to fully rule them out. At several stages, I also consulted directly with a Loyalist specialist at the University of New Brunswick and accessed resources at the Loyalist Library in Fredericton.

In Pennsylvania, I analyzed land warrants, court records, tax lists, petitions, military rosters, probate files, and family bibles. Some of these Williams served in the U.S. military. Others were killed in frontier raids or died intestate. Many left families who remained in the United States. I did not stop at the Revolutionary period—I followed these individuals and their descendants into the early to mid-1800s, tracking migrations to Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. Ultimately, none of these candidates aligned with the Loyalist profile or had any connection to Antrim, Belfast, or the broader Ferguson–Trimble migration cluster. Most notably, none of them disappeared from the record in the 1770s and reappeared in New Brunswick in the 1780s—the defining trait of our William.

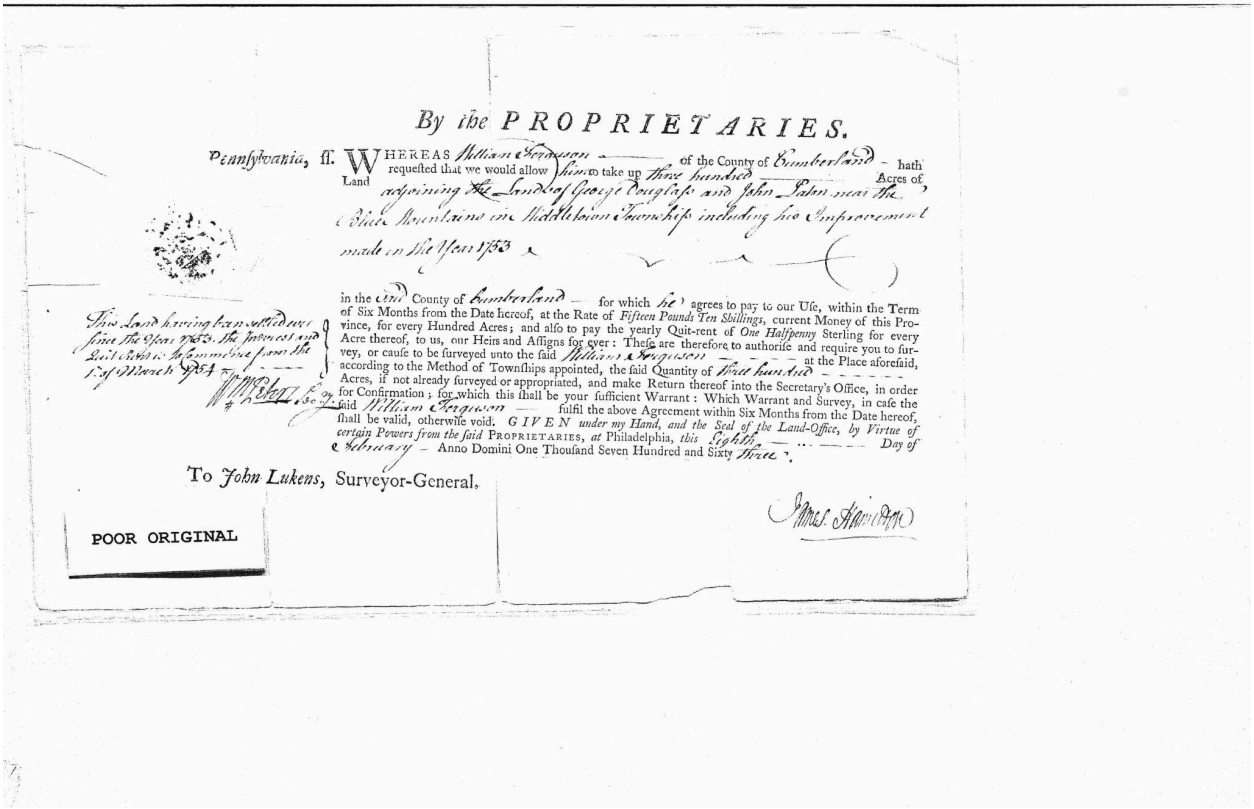
In British and Loyalist military records, I reviewed muster rolls, regimental returns, pension lists, and land petition affidavits for every individual named William Ferguson known to have served

the Crown between 1775 and 1784. I submitted these findings to the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, who reviewed the evidence and confirmed that this William Ferguson met their criteria as a proven Loyalist. They told me on the phone "There is one confirmed William Ferguson Loyalist". Notably, the vast majority of men by that name had no documented ties to Pennsylvania, further strengthening the identification of our William Ferguson as the Loyalist sergeant who petitioned for land in New Brunswick in 1786 and owned land in Pennsylvania.

Through this process of elimination—across three continents, three generations, and over a century of records—I ruled out every other plausible William Ferguson that I could find. What remained was the one man whose record never broke: born in Belfast in 1743, owned his own land next to family before the war, fled as a Loyalist in 1775, and petitioned for land in New Brunswick by 1786. His neighbors came with him. His cluster remained intact. And not one other William Ferguson documented between 1700 and 1830 ever checked all the same boxes.

Cumberland County
William Ferguson, Loyalist Origins in Pennsylvania (1753–1776)

Between 1762 and 1767, multiple land warrant applications from Cumberland County began to reference Ferguson settlers, including William, Thomas, John, Hugh, James and others. Thomas and John Ferguson purchased four tracts of land along the Juniata River, establishing themselves in the Kishacoquillas Valley, Cumberland County (now part of Mifflin County).



By the PROPRIETARIES.

Pennsylvania, ss. WHEREAS William Ferguson of the County of Cumberland hath requested that we would allow him to take up Three hundred Acres of Land adjoining the Land of George Dougless and John Eaton near the Blue Mountains in Middleton Township including his Improvement made in the Year 1753

This Land having been settled ever since the Year 1753. the Interest and Quit Rents to Commence from the 1st of March 1764

in the said County of Cumberland for which he agrees to pay to our Use, within the Term of Six Months from the Date hereof, at the Rate of Fifteen Pounds Ten Shillings, current Money of this Province, for every Hundred Acres; and also to pay the yearly Quit-rent of One Halfpenny Sterling for every Acre thereof, to us, our Heirs and Assigns for ever: These are therefore to authorise and require you to survey, or cause to be surveyed unto the said William Ferguson at the Place aforesaid, according to the Method of Townships appointed, the said Quantity of Three hundred Acres, if not already surveyed or appropriated, and make Return thereof into the Secretary's Office, in order for Confirmation; for which this shall be your sufficient Warrant: Which Warrant and Survey, in case the said William Ferguson fulfil the above Agreement within Six Months from the Date hereof, shall be valid, otherwise void. GIVEN under my Hand, and the Seal of the Land-Office, by Virtue of certain Powers from the said PROPRIETARIES, at Philadelphia, this Eighth Day of February Anno Domini One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty Three.

To John Lukens, Surveyor-General.

POOR ORIGINAL

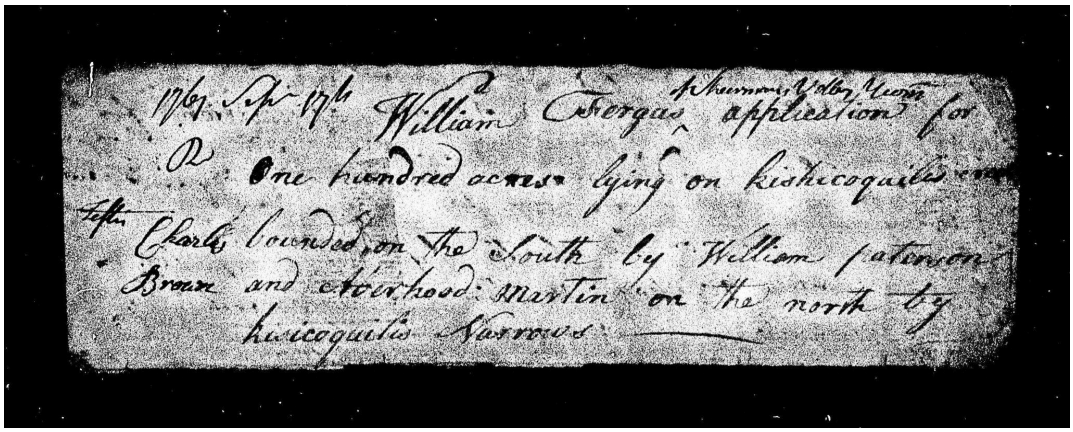
Three of these men—William Sr. in Middleton Township and Thomas and John in the Kishacoquillas Valley—would later claim they had occupied and improved their respective lands since 1753, while Hugh claimed to have been at his tract since 1755.

Their names appeared alongside other west side Cumberland County applicants such as: Trimble, Patterson, Clark, Hamilton, Gibson, Gregg, Moor, Brown, Blair, Black, Campbell, Coulter, Dickey, Forsyth, Forster, Fleming, Finlay, Hay, Hamilton, Hunter, Reed, Robison, Snider, Stewart.

James Trimble's signature appears on nearly every land warrant application in the area, suggesting he served as a trusted local surveyor or land witness for the Ulster Presbyterian cluster.

By 1763, William Ferguson Sr. and Jr. appeared on the tax rolls of Middleton Township, collectively holding 150 acres along with John Ferguson. Their neighbors included surnames that consistently appear across this research: Blair, Brown, Buchanan, Campbell, Clark, Douglas, Dickey, Fleming, Gibson, Moor, Patterson, Stewart, John and Widow Tremble. By 1765, these patterns hadn't changed much.

William Ferguson Sr's first listed neighbor in Pennsylvania was John Patterson—a name that recurs in the same Loyalist petition as John Ferguson in Charlotte County, New Brunswick. Further reinforcing the pattern of long-term association between families, William Ferguson Sr. was documented on tax records as borrowing a small tract of land from John Patton—whose name was often interchanged with Patterson in regional records— during the Revolutionary War.



From 1767 through 1770, a new wave of land purchases unfolded. William Ferguson acquired land lying on the Kishacoquillas Creek adjoining Charles Brown and William Patterson. Hugh Ferguson secured a tract in Aughwick, and Henry and Hans Ferguson established themselves further west along the Little Juniata River in what would become Ferguson Township, Huntingdon County. Elizabeth Ferguson, wife of Hugh, acquired 200 acres in Snake Spring Township, Bedford County, in 1768—land they would later lose during the war and spent years fighting to get back.

The Fergusons held sizable plots and had large households. But the outbreak of the Revolutionary War disrupted all of it. By 1775, William, James, and Thomas Ferguson filed debt

recovery suits—possibly collecting funds in preparation for flight. There were no land purchases recorded in Cumberland County between 1776 and 1782.

By 1776, both William Jr. and Sr. were referred to in land documents as “late of Middleton Township.” William Sr. had lost his property and by 1779 was listed as living among the Pattersons, owning only one horse and 100 acres. His son William Jr. had vanished from the region—only to reappear in New Brunswick as a Loyalist petitioner in 1785 mentioning his Pennsylvania family and land.

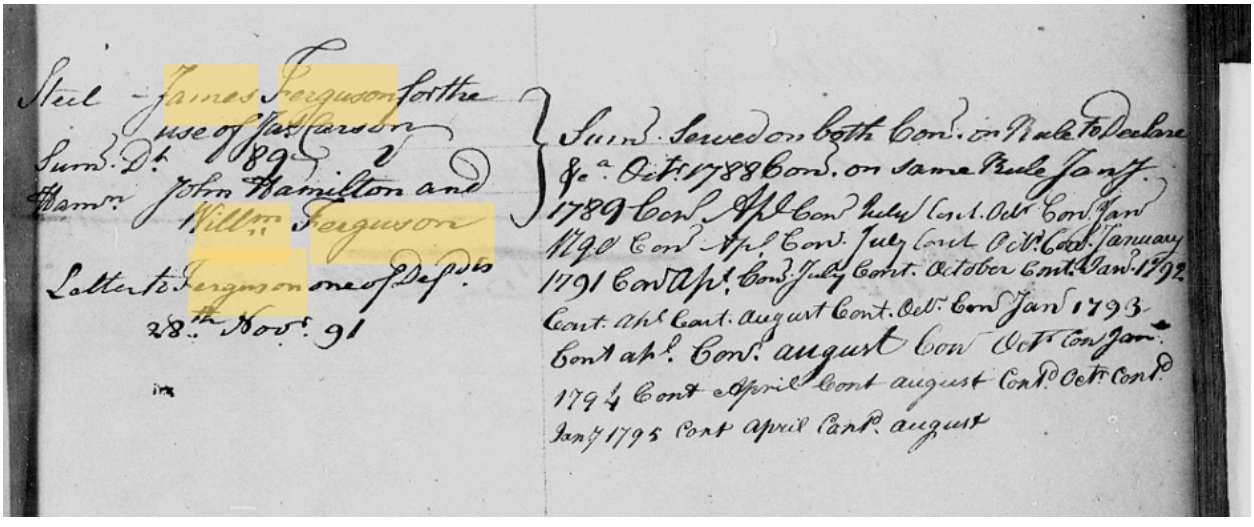
Still in 1776, Hans Ferguson transferred his land in Ferguson Twp to George Ferguson and then fled to Ohio, where he would later die and requested in his will that he be buried near Middleton, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.

By 1779, The Kishacoquillas Valley Fergusons were sheltering with Henry in Ferguson Twp, and eventually petitioned to reclaim their land around 1790, shortly after the war had ended.

Meanwhile, Hugh and John Ferguson, displaced from Colerain, began sharing land with the Gibson and Mortimer families. Hugh’s daughter married into the Mortimers, and multiple generations of Mortimer and Gibson connections would persist into Elizabeth Ferguson’s 1810 will. These networks of support were critical during the upheaval. I spent quite a bit of time researching Hugh and am quite confident that I’ve traced his origins back to the Ballyclare region in Northern Ireland.

By 1784, William Ferguson returned to Pennsylvania to find his extended family dispersed and landholdings lost.

In 1786, William Ferguson and John Hamilton filed Loyalist land petitions in New Brunswick, each identifying himself as a displaced veteran of the Crown forces. What makes this especially significant is that these same two men—who had appeared as neighbors on the 1763 tax list for Middleton Township, Cumberland County—resurfaced just two years later as co-defendants in a prolonged civil suit recorded in the Cumberland County Prothonotary’s Continuance Docket. The case, titled James Ferguson for the use of James Carson v. John Hamilton and William Ferguson, extended from 1788 to 1795 and likely involved unresolved financial obligations or land claims tied to the upheavals of the American Revolution.



A docket entry dated 28 November 1791 reads: “Letter to Ferguson on one of the depositions,” confirming that sworn testimony was being collected. The case continued for several years after the death of William Ferguson Sr. in 1790, leaving open the possibility that the defendant was either him or his son, William Jr.. The involvement of James Ferguson—referred to elsewhere as “Esquire”—suggests he may have been acting in a legal or fiduciary capacity on behalf of James Carson, rather than as a family adversary. Taken together, this episode illustrates the lasting entanglements among the Ferguson–Hamilton cluster and the legal and financial aftershocks that followed Loyalist exile.

By 1790, the Federal Census revealed Fergusons spread between Cumberland County, Bedford County and Mifflin County. The Census from Cumberland County captured the Ferguson migration cluster still intact, though weakened, nearly four decades after their arrival. On a single census sheet appear William, James, Hans, and Thomas Ferguson— immediately surrounded by familiar surnames such as Gibson, Holmes, Hamilton, Stewart, Fleming, and Reed.

In the same year, Hugh successfully reclaimed the land Elizabeth purchased in 1767. He died in 1810, naming wife Elizabeth and son John as executors. His will confirms their reduced circumstances—just one property remained. Elizabeth died later that year, naming Mortimer grandchildren and reiterating the family’s dependence on neighbors.

Other Fergusons remained in Pennsylvania, particularly in the Juniata frontier. Thomas Ferguson, a lawyer, returned from the west to reclaim his 1753 Kishacoquillas land in 1791. Thomas (whom the town Ferguson, Pennsylvania was named after) died intestate in 1806 and I found well over 100 pages of notes from his wife Elizabeth settling all his debts. Hans Ferguson settled in Jefferson County, Ohio, dying in 1806 and requesting burial back in Middleton, Pennsylvania. Their stories reveal a fragmented, embattled family.

Several men—William, Thomas, John, Henry, Peter, Alexander—served in Loyalist regiments. Many of their land petitions in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia cite military service and prior residence in Pennsylvania. These military records align perfectly with the disappearance of their names from Pennsylvania after 1776.

Court and land records confirm that William Sr. died in 1791 and left his estate to his wife Elizabeth. His will, and Elizabeth’s end path, remain undiscovered.

New Brunswick: The Loyalist Reunification of the Ferguson Cluster (1784–1820)

The conclusion of the American Revolution marked the next major shift in the Ferguson family’s story. Having lost land and security in Pennsylvania, William Ferguson and a wave of interconnected Presbyterian families resettled in New Brunswick, supported by Loyalist grants. This period does not represent a scattering, but rather a reunification of a migration cluster that had already traveled together for generations.

William Ferguson, the central figure in this migration, petitioned for land in Gloucester County in 1786, having served in the 29th Regiment. Other Fergusons appear alongside him across the province: Thomas Ferguson, Royal Artillery – Gloucester County, 1797; John Ferguson, American Legion – Saint John, 1785; Robert Ferguson – Saint John, 1785. Henry Ferguson, Saint John, 1785. John, Robert and Henry in Saint John shared a petition with Blairs, Browns, Campbells, Clarks, Foresters, Hamiltons, Holt, Holmes, Pattersons, Reeds, Snyders, Stewarts, and others from our cluster.

Just as in Pennsylvania, familiar surnames appear repeatedly in Loyalist petitions across New Brunswick counties petitioning in groups:

Gibson, Brown, Campbell, Clark, Hay, and Moor – 1784, York County (Fanning's Corps)
Joseph **Trumble** - 1784, Kings County
Joseph **Trumbul**l - 1785, Saint John
Holt, Holmes, Clark, Brown, Saint John, 1785;
Brown and Gregg – 1785, Sunbury County (Delancy's Brigade);
John Crumbell - 1786, Queens County
Patterson and Brown – 1786, Saint John;
Blair, Patterson, and Campbell – 1786, Charlotte County;
Holt, William Moore – 1787, Northumberland County;
James Clark, William Moor, George Brown, and Alexander Hay – 1787, Northumberland County;
Hunter, Black, and Forsyth – 1789, Northumberland County (84th Regiment);
Patterson, Brown, Campbell,**Trimble**, and Moor,– 1820, Charlotte County.
William Moore - 1830, Gloucester County;

These are not isolated petitions. William Ferguson of Middleton, Pennsylvania, had lived alongside William Clark, Donald Buchanan, William Brown, John Ferguson, and others between 1763 and 1765—many of whom served in Royal Artillery or engineering units, including William Clark and William Robison, both associated with Thomas Ferguson. After the war, they reappear in Loyalist petitions within two years of William's own: William Clark in Northumberland County; Donald Buchanan and William Brown in Gloucester (where William Ferguson himself settled); John Ferguson and William Robison together in Saint John.

The coordinated timing and placement of these land petitions, alongside shared military service and longstanding community ties, strongly support the conclusion that William Ferguson of Middletown is the same man who settled in Tracadie, Gloucester County, as part of a broader Loyalist migration.

Belfast: Ferguson–Trimble Network and the Carrickfergus Line (1665–1753)

The historical record for Belfast and greater Antrim in the early 1700s is fragmented. Many original parish registers and civic documents were destroyed or lost prior to 1806, making direct birth, marriage, or death records for this period extremely rare. As a result, this chapter relies heavily on corroborating evidence—land leases, deed memorials, tax rolls, and patterns of

association between families. By assembling these fragments across multiple sources, a clear picture of the Ferguson family's presence and social network in Belfast begins to emerge.

By the early 1700s, the Ferguson family was firmly established in Belfast and Carrickfergus, and neighbouring communities embedded in a network of Presbyterian professionals, tradesmen, and landholders whose origins trace back to Ayrshire. The records from this period—particularly the Registry of Deeds and civic land leases—make clear that the Fergusons were not isolated actors but part of a broader, tightly interlinked cluster. Their story during this phase centers on education, landholding, religious dissent, and connections to other core families like the Trimbles, Moors, Gibsons, Campbells, Browns, Kirks, Reeds and others.

John Ferguson, a gentleman residing in Brunswick Square, Belfast, as of 1726 lists his age as 61, placing his birth around 1665. He is likely the father—or at least senior kinsman—of Victor, William, and John Ferguson, who appear repeatedly in Belfast and Strabane between 1715 and 1753.

Victor Ferguson, born circa 1688–1698, is first recorded as a "Doctor of Physick" in Broad Street, Belfast, and later as a Reverend in Strabane, County Tyrone. He remained unmarried and died without issue, but his extensive civic presence—including witnessing wills and holding property—demonstrates the professional status of the family.

John Ferguson, Apothecary, also resided in Broad Street Belfast before relocating to Strabane. He was legally confirmed as Victor's brother and managed a £600 trust for him in 1740 (Memorial #75710). His probate record, filed by his widow Elizabeth Read, confirms his death by May 1749.

The key figure for migration and later Loyalist identity, however, is William Ferguson, likely born around 1685–90. He was a schoolmaster and gentleman, deeply tied to the Trimble (Crymble) family near Ballyclare and Carrickfergus, County Antrim. William Ferguson appeared as a witness in Trimble family lease documents from 1709 and 1729, and held property in Carrickfergus near the jail and barracks.

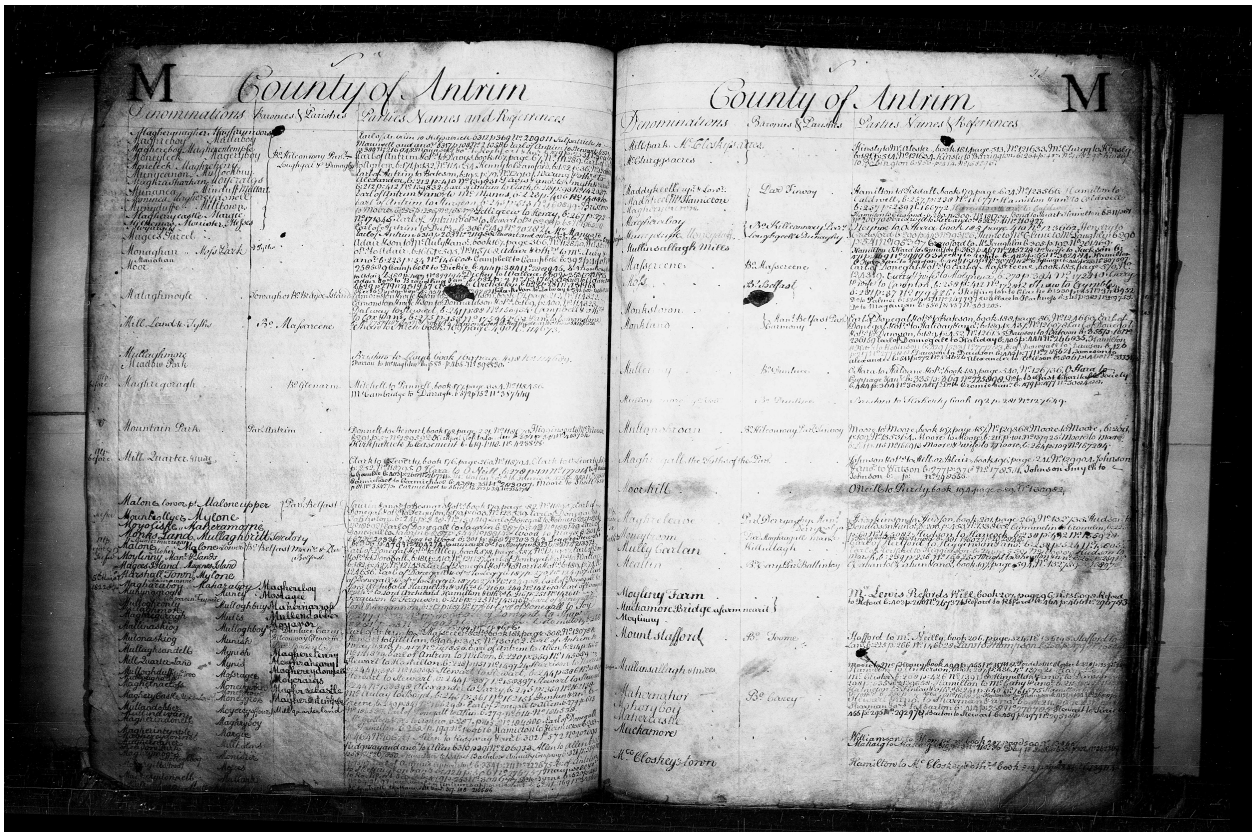
In 1710, a land transfer between members of the Trimble family in Belfast was witnessed by William Ferguson and James Kirk, described in the deed as "both Gent of Carrickfergus." This early legal partnership places William Ferguson in direct civic involvement alongside the Kirk family, already trusted in land affairs. Decades later, in 1762, William Ferguson, Thomas Ferguson, and three Kirk brothers all purchased land in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania—again in close proximity. By 1785, John Kirk petitioned for Loyalist land in New Brunswick alongside John, Henry, and Robert Ferguson. This enduring proximity across three regions and three generations strongly suggests that the Kirk and Ferguson families migrated together and maintained a tightly linked kinship or trust network from Carrickfergus to Pennsylvania and then into Loyalist New Brunswick.

By 1718, William was identified as a schoolmaster living beside Cornelius Trimble, a prominent Alderman. These aren't speculative links—they come from multiple entries in the Registry of

Deeds and reflect William's active role in civic and legal affairs decades before his family emigrated to America.

A 1724 lease from County Antrim confirms that William Ferguson was a co-leaseholder of 147 acres along with David Moor and Jannett Gibson—two key surnames in the Ferguson migration cluster. The lease was executed by Charles Campbell and witnessed by James Fleming; other cluster names.

WIliam Ferguson Jr., son of William Ferguson of Carrickfergus, appears by name in a 1733 lease registered under the Earl of Donegall for lands in Ballyclare, County Antrim. The lease identifies him as a 15-year-old, the son of William Ferguson Gent of Carrickfergus, placing his birth around 1718. In 1753, that same lease was formally re-registered in his name (Memorial #108739), a legal act that appears to mark the family's final preparations for departure from Ireland. This re-registration closely follows the disposal of at least two William Ferguson-held properties near Belfast in 1746 and 1749—transactions that may indicate a broader effort to liquidate holdings. A thorough review of the Irish Registry of Deeds through 1776 yields no further Ferguson land activity tied to this family after decades of records, reinforcing the conclusion that they had emigrated by 1753.



This is a recorded landholding transaction involving a Ferguson in the Barony of Donegall, which at that time covered central Belfast and surrounding townlands, including areas under the Earl of Donegall's estate (Chichester family). Cluster Surnames Also Present: Moore to Moore; Campbell to Dickie; Clarke, Paterson, Hunter, Stewart, Gibson, Brown – all appear across this page.

Scotland - The Origin of the Cluster?

The earliest confirmed presence of our Ferguson family—alongside their core network of interrelated Presbyterian families—appears in Dumfriesshire and Ayrshire, Scotland, during the 17th century. Civic records, legal rolls, and apprenticeship registers from 1600 to the late 1690s place multiple families in direct association through marriage, economic transactions, and religious dissent.

These families—Ferguson, Blair, Campbell, Kirk, Moore, Gibson, Hunter, Paterson, Stewart, Trimble, Brown, Hay, Clark, Hamilton, and others—are documented side by side in Ayrshire as early as 1605. Their names recur across town registers, court documents, and church records, showing a clear Presbyterian identity and occupational continuity.

The earliest document I've reviewed—dated 1605—is not only the first appearance of the Ferguson name in our lineage, but a remarkable early snapshot of the broader migration cluster that would eventually resurface in Antrim, Pennsylvania, and New Brunswick. This single record contains multiple references to names and connections that echo unmistakably through the next two centuries of documented movement: "Hunter to Ferguson"; "Douglas to Ferguson"; "Blair, Ferguson sidenters" (Sidenters, or assidenters, were sitting members of the town council or guild—individuals with civic status and the right to vote or make decisions in municipal matters); "Hunter of Wilson to Weir"; "Hamilton to Campbell," "Ramsay to Campbell," "Douglas to Campbell"; "Douglas to Blair," "Blair to Ferguson"; "Mary daugh to Gibson" (possibly a marriage record); "Martin to Moore"; "Stewart July 7"; Peripheral names like Cochran, Montgomery, Cathcart, Anderson, Kennedy, Smith, and Miller—families consistently adjacent to the Fergusons in Ulster and Pennsylvania

These entries reflect not just individuals but interlinked transactions, guild memberships, and town council actions, pointing to a well-connected network of Presbyterian Lowland Scots already functioning as a unit long before their migration to Ulster.

But perhaps the most striking discovery is the presence of Turnbulls—specifically Robert Turnbull, burgess of Edinburgh, and Thomas Turnbull, his assistant—recorded alongside Robert Ferguson of Craigdarroch and Andrew Ferguson. This document confirms that the Ferguson–Trimble alliance predates Ulster entirely—originating not as neighbors in Ireland, but as contemporaries in 17th-century Scotland, engaged in the same civic and guild structures.

Glasgow's Burgess and Guild Brethren rolls from the 1640s–1650s further reinforce this cluster. There, many of the same surnames appear as merchants, tradesmen, schoolmasters, and civic officials—forming a literate, economically mobile class of Lowland Presbyterians. These are the same types who would later appear as leaseholders in Antrim, Schoolmasters in Carrickfergus, Engineers in the military, and Loyalist petitioners in New Brunswick.

A 1678 Ayr civic record reveals a dense network of cluster surnames. Despite transcription errors, names like John Ferguson, James Paterson, John and Robert Campbell, James Blair, and James Hunter appear throughout the town rolls.

A related document from Ayr in 1688, though fragmented, lists several cluster surnames—including Ferguson, Campbell, Hamilton, Turnbull, Blair, Patterson, Hunter, and Gibson—participating in land and legal transactions. These surnames appear not as scattered individuals but as a functioning community engaged in collective civic life.

An Edinburgh apprentice register from the 1690s adds more depth. James Ferguson, a feltmaker and Burgess of Edinburgh, took on apprentices, while names like Alexander Hamilton (skinner), John Turnbull (wright), and Andrew Campbell (tailor) appear in adjacent entries. These surnames mirror the core cluster later found in Ulster and North America and suggest earlier links through Scottish urban trades and guild networks.

Another Edinburgh record from 1688 lists Alexander Ferguson, pewterer, and George Turnbull, baker, each taking on apprentices. The appearance of Ferguson and Turnbull together—acting as masters in skilled trades—strengthens the case that the Ferguson–Trimble (Turnbull) alliance originated in Scottish professional and civic networks well before the Ulster migrations.

In a 1700 Ayr council roll, William Fergerson appears alongside John and David Fergusson in official business relating to land assessments and mills. Names like James and John Campbell, John and Samuel Moor, Adam Gibson, George Brown, James Hunter, and John Blair are listed with them.

To be continued…

This is not a closed file. Every new lease, petition, court record, or marginal note has the potential to shift the timeline, clarify a relationship, or uncover a forgotten branch. The archives in Ulster and Scotland still hold untapped material. Land disputes, church records, and militia rolls remain waiting in dusty volumes and unindexed ledgers.

The story of this family—and of the Presbyterian network they moved with—is still unfolding.